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SERMON IV.

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BONDAGE OF SIN---FREEDOM BY THE GOSPEL.

JOHN 8: 30—36. *As he spake these words, many believed on him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

SLAVERY, in all its forms, excites in the breast of every individual on whom it is imposed, a feeling of spontaneous and indignant resentment. So abhorrent is the idea of bondage, that men often turn away their eyes from the chains which confine them, and flatter themselves that they are free, when in fact they are suffering the most absolute and debasing slavery. Too proud to admit their degraded condition, they repel with indignation the suggestion, that they are not freemen.

Such was the condition, and such were the feelings of the Jews to whom our Lord said, that if they had believed his doctrines and obeyed his commands, they should know the truth, and the truth should make them free. Although previously disposed to think favorably of our Lord's claims as the promised Messiah, the Jews, on intimation of their bondage, indignantly replied—"We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, ye shall be made free?" They forgot that their fathers

were bondsmen in Egypt, and subjected to the most severe and ignominious drudgery. They forgot that their nation was carried captive to Babylon, their cities pillaged, and their country left seventy years desolate. They forgot, that at the very time when they were boasting of their freedom, the sceptre had departed from Judah, and that they were paying tribute to the Roman Emperor. Above all, they forgot the moral and spiritual bondage in which, as individuals, they were involved; alienated from God, the slaves of their unholy appetites and passions; their souls as truly in bondage as were the bodies of their forefathers, when under the lash of Egyptian taskmasters.

In no age and in no country, were any people, so likely as we are, to form erroneous opinions respecting their condition as freemen. As American citizens, we can say, with a much greater semblance of truth than did the descendants of Abraham,—“We are in bondage to no man.” We enjoy a higher degree of national freedom than any people on the face of the globe. In its origin, our government approaches nearer to a social compact, voluntarily formed by the people with a view to promote their mutual benefit, than that of any other nation. Under the protection of our admirable national and state constitutions, every citizen has secured a just and appropriate influence in creating and in administering the laws by which he is governed. Too remote and too powerful to apprehend danger from any external foe, we scorn the idea of foreign invasion and foreign oppression. The eulogies which we hear on the anniversaries of our national independence, and the sentiments uttered around the festive board, and echoed from our schools and legislative halls, are calculated to foster and confirm the belief that nothing is wanting to the consummation of our personal and national freedom. So pleasing is the reflection, and in many respects so favorable is our condition, that, were a messenger from heaven to announce, that something is wanting to our real and permanent freedom, he would probably receive as little credence as did our Lord, when he intimated to the Jews that they were in bondage. Nevertheless, the same bondage exists among us, and the same causes are in operation, which destroyed the national independence and the spiritual liberty of the descendants of Abraham. “Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin.”

Real personal freedom cannot exist where sin is predominant; and national liberty and independence will sooner or later vanish, when corruption and vice pervade the great body of the community. This is the *first* great leading truth taught us in the portion of sacred scripture before us.

The *second* is, that the prevalence of the principles and spirit of the gospel, is the only effectual means of acquiring and preserving personal and national freedom. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”

The general proposition which we design to establish and illustrate, is, *That a state of sin is a state of bondage; and that the only means of acquiring and preserving personal and national freedom, is the prevalence of the principles and spirit of the gospel.*

I. OF PERSONAL FREEDOM.

We commence with remarking, that, as moral agents, men are necessarily accountable to that Almighty Being who gave them existence. It is utterly impossible that any finite being can, with impunity, resist the claims which God has upon him, arising from the constitution of his nature, and from the right of the Creator to impose laws calculated to secure his own honor and the happiness of his moral subjects. To freedom from an obligation to obey laws imposed by an infinitely wise and good and all-powerful Being, man cannot attain. His very nature makes him subject to law; and before he can free himself from its authority, he must divest himself of his intellectual and moral powers, and become as incapable of virtue and vice as the brutes. He must also withdraw himself from the dominion and government of the Almighty, and live and act independent of the power which gave him existence.

Men may sin, that is, they may transgress the laws which God has prescribed for the regulation of their conduct: because the possibility of transgressing, as well as of obeying a law, is essential to the idea of an accountable agent. But sin cannot be committed with impunity. Whoever transgresses a law, necessarily incurs its penalty. That all men have sinned, is a fact too positively asserted in the sacred scriptures, and too plainly evinced in the history of the world, to admit of a moment's doubt. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Every sinner is under sentence of condemnation in the sight of God, bound to suffer the penalty of the law which he has transgressed. He is therefore a slave, in consequence of his crimes. Having forfeited his freedom, he is under bonds stronger than those which confine the slave in his galley, or the malefactor in his dungeon. Eternal and immutable justice has pronounced him guilty, and responsible for the forfeiture which he has incurred. Although he may walk at large, and feel no shackles imposed by human hands, he is really a prisoner on whom sentence is passed. The great God needs no chains or prison-house, in order to confine those who have rebelled against his authority. They cannot hide themselves from his view, or escape beyond the reach of his hand. The ministers of his justice can as easily seize the prince in his palace, as the peasant in his cottage. The general at the head of a victorious army, is as easily arrested and brought before the supreme tribunal, as the criminal bound with chains and secured in the recesses of the strongest prison. And can any one, who is thus guilty and condemned, actually in the hands of a holy and a just God, liable at any moment to suffer the full penalty of the law which

he has broken, be considered as free, as having a claim to the immunities of an obedient and faithful subject? The condition of a slave, compelled to toil and sweat at the pleasure of a task-master, or of a prisoner immured in a dungeon, built by human hands, is free and happy, compared with that of the sinner under the displeasure of a holy and a just God.

In reference to this state, in which every impenitent sinner is found, our Lord has said, "if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." Free from the sentence of condemnation; free from the claims of divine justice; free from the pains of the second death; restored to all the immunities and privileges of the sons of God. This is a glorious and inestimable freedom, infinitely superior in value to the immunities conferred by the most powerful states or kingdoms of this world.

To bestow this freedom, is the peculiar prerogative of the Son of God. Long before his advent it was predicted that he should "proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." And when he was on earth we find him exercising the high prerogative of forgiving sin, saying to the miserable and guilty son or daughter, "thy sins are forgiven thee," and proving by incontestible miracles that he had power to do so.

And let it be distinctly remembered, that it is not by an act of absolute sovereignty; it is not at the expense of justice, that the Son of God opens the prison doors and lets the captive go free. He did not declare the law, which condemned the sinner, to be unjust or even severe. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law; not to invalidate but to secure the rights of the divine government, while he proclaims mercy and forgiveness to the penitent.

The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our nature, so that he might be in a condition to obey the divine law, as well as to suffer its penalty; and thus to redeem from the curse of the law those who believe in his name. "He was wounded," says the scriptures, "for our transgressions: he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." "He suffered the just for the unjust: He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." So that we have "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin."

The plain import of these passages of sacred scripture, as well as of many others, is that Jesus Christ voluntarily stood in the place of his people; bore the curse of the law, and in consequence of the satisfaction which he made to divine justice, he is authorized to release from condemnation and everlasting death, those who believe in his name. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed:" free from the curse of the law—free from final condemnation.

To participate in this freedom, faith in Jesus Christ is so indispensably necessary, that all who do not believe in his name are in a state of condemnation. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already."

2. There is another important sense in which sinners are in bondage. We mean, *the bondage arising from the dominion of sin*; from the prevalence of the vilest and most corrupt principles of human nature, over the noblest and purest powers of the soul.

It is true, there is nothing involuntary or compulsive in this servitude. If there were, our condition would excite commiseration rather than deserve blame. There is such a thing as voluntary slavery; the application of high and noble powers to mean and servile purposes; the subjection of high and commanding faculties to those which are low and groveling; the employment of powers which fit man to glorify God and to promote the welfare of his fellows, in rebellion against his Maker, and in spreading corruption and crime and wretchedness among men.

Man is naturally dependent on God, and rightfully bound to submit to his authority, and to obey his laws: And the entire dedication of all the powers of the soul to the service of God is the most perfect freedom of which man is capable; because this is a reasonable service—a service calculated to bring all the powers of the soul into delightful and harmonious action—to raise man to his highest dignity, and to secure individual and general happiness.

When man throws off his allegiance to his Maker, he necessarily enrols himself under the standard of the prince of darkness, and becomes his willing and obedient slave, ready to follow his suggestions and to execute his purposes. In this case, there can be no neutrality. There are, and in the nature of things there can be, only two great parties in the moral world; the one for God, and the other against him; the one under the standard of light, and the other under that of darkness. The only question to be decided, is, which of these two masters shall be chosen. The refusal or neglect to obey God, is a virtual determination to take the side of the enemy.

It is often the pride and the boast of those who disclaim all pretensions to piety, that they are free and unshackled; not restrained by rigid and unbending rules; that they are at liberty to shape their course according to circumstances, and at all times to do whatever they may find most agreeable. But what is the amount of this boasted liberty? It is to disregard all those considerations which should influence a rational being, to set at nought the counsels of reason and the dictates of conscience and to follow the blind impulse of appetite and passion. It is liberty to close the eyes; so as not to perceive dangers, and to rush on blindfolded to destruction. As well might the idiot or maniac boast of his freedom; because he perceives not or regards not the motives which govern the actions of other men.

But it is not true, that those, who reject the authority of God and trample on his laws, act independently, and are free from foreign influence. Not unfrequently they are absolute slaves to the opinions of others; and that not generally of the wise and good, but of the foolish and profligate. While boasting of exemption from the unbending rules of moral conduct prescribed in the bible, they are subject to the capricious and absurd laws of fashion, and they are often under the necessity of acting in a manner inconsistent with their own ideas of propriety and duty. Taking their standard of excellence, not from the immutable laws of rectitude and truth, but from the opinions of others, they have no character which can be called their own. Borrowing their moral complexion from those with whom they are surrounded, they exhibit whatever color their associates are pleased to assign them.

For this reason, the young and inexperienced are so often led astray. If we see a young man frequenting the society of the profane and profligate, we may, with almost absolute certainty, predict his ruin. The moral and religious principles inculcated by his parents are gradually undermined by the suggestion that these principles are incompatible with the freedom to which every generous youth should aspire. Flattered with the thought of emancipation from parental authority, he yields himself to the guidance of his new instructors. And when he has once submitted to their control, they rule him with a power tenfold more absolute than that previously exerted by parental hands. They impose on him a code of laws, falsely called *the laws of honor*, more capricious, more absurd, and more despotic than the laws of Draco. No longer is he at liberty to act according to his own judgment of what is right, but in obedience to the maxims adopted by his associates, he must, if they so direct, violate the most sacred laws of humanity and religion.

Why is it that a young man of moderate fortune runs into such extravagance in dress and style of living as involves him in debt, injures his best friends, and perhaps drives him to fraudulent practices in order to answer the demands of importunate creditors? Why, at the risk of acquiring invincible and ruinous habits, does he force himself to taste the intoxicating cup, for which he has no relish? Why does he stake his fortune at the gaming table? Why does he hazard his life or aim to shed his brother's blood, for an offence not worthy, in the estimation of a wise man, of the least notice? Why in these, and in many other ways of a similar character, are many, styled noble and generous spirits, led bound and blindfolded to their own destruction? It is, because they are slaves to the opinions of others. Not convinced by arguments addressed to their reason, or induced by motives of feeling their sense of duty, but led by a blind and abject submission to an absurd and often ridiculous custom, they sacrifice their present and eternal interests, rather than make a single effort to emancipate themselves from their bondage. And never-

theless, these are the high-minded and daring spirits, who deem it degrading to acknowledge subjection to the Majesty of heaven!

Again, others are so under the dominion of their passions, that they cannot be considered as freemen. Pride, ambition, avarice, sensuality, each has its votaries, who bow before a favorite altar with profound and untiring adoration. So common and notorious is this fact, the usual and expressive manner of speaking of such men is, that they are the slaves of ambition, of avarice, of sensuality. They are so absorbed in one overpowering feeling, that no motives except such as touch their favorite passion can excite them to action. Look at the miser, toiling day and night, denying himself the ordinary comforts of life, deaf to every call of humanity, and callous to every benevolent and generous emotion, enduring a drudgery as severe, and feeling a solicitude far greater, than the slave who performs his daily task, and once a week receives his measured allowance of the coarsest food. Look at the drunkard, destroying his health, wasting his property, beggaring his family, hastening with rapid steps to a premature grave, regardless of every motive except the cravings of his depraved appetite. If there be any case in which a man is under a physical necessity to go on to perdition, contrary to his best purposes and strongest resolutions, it is that of the confirmed, habitual drunkard. He sees the consequences of his conduct. He knows the issue. He feels the poverty, the disease, the disgrace, the wretchedness, which surround him, and the dismal pit before him is not concealed from his view. He resolves and re-resolves to reform, and again and again he is drawn, by his inextinguishable and maddening thirst, to the fatal cup. What folly! what madness! to approach the verge of that awful precipice down which the descent, when once commenced, is inevitably certain! The drunkard is a slave, whose emancipation is hardly possible. But to establish our position, we need not select extreme cases. In whatever heart sin is predominant, the man is a slave. His nature is debased, his noble faculties perverted, and all his powers laid under bondage. The ethereal spirit, which like the eagle should soar towards heaven, breathe the pure atmosphere of the upper regions, and from the commanding elevation, contemplate the glories of creation, is drawn and bound down to earth, by gross and sensual attractions. And the most deplorable circumstance, in this degraded condition is, that the bondage is voluntary. The slave loves his chains, sings and dances, and imagines himself to be free, while the fetters which confine him are sinking deeper and deeper,—gradually paralyzing the powers of moral action, and producing stupor and spiritual death.

And to what power shall we look for deliverance from this bondage? The means so long and so extensively used in superstitious ages, have had no tendency to release the soul from spiritual bondage. The lacerations and various severities inflicted on the body, have left the heart estranged from God, and under the dominion of sin.

Mere intellectual culture, the advancement of science and the arts, the improvements in civil government, have no necessary connection with the emancipation of the soul from sin. The polish of civilization may remove or conceal the grossness of vice, but it leaves the radical principles and the moral character of the individual essentially the same. Of this truth, no other proof is necessary than the fact, that many men of highly cultivated intellect are pre-eminently corrupt in their moral habits, and destitute of the least semblance of piety.

Our only hope of deliverance from the dominion, as well as from the guilt of sin, is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The great end of his mission from heaven to earth, was "to destroy the works of the devil;" not merely to save from the punishment which sin deserved, but to save from sin itself; to deliver men from spiritual thralldom, and to bring them into the liberty of the sons of God.

This blessed and glorious emancipation, the Son of God accomplishes in two ways. First, by motives addressed to the understanding and the heart; and secondly, by the operations of the Holy Spirit.

We assert an unquestionable truth, when we say that the motives to piety and holiness, contained in the holy scriptures, are stronger and more efficacious than are to be found elsewhere. Before the coming of Christ, the belief of a future state existed in many nations: yet the apostle does not exaggerate, when he says that Jesus Christ "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." An occasional star had cast a feeble glimmering on the world enveloped in general darkness: now the rising Sun poured his bright effulgence on the astonished nations. Conjecture was exchanged for demonstration, doubt for certainty.

A future state of happiness or misery, according to the character of each individual, is not the only truth presented in the gospel with a clearness which commands the assent of the understanding, and awakens the sleeping energies of the conscience. The perfections of God, his justice, his purity, his love, his mercy, are displayed in such a manner as to bring God very near to us; especially when viewed in connection with our relation to him as accountable agents, and above all, as sinners who have incurred his displeasure. The turpitude and malignity, as well as the guilt of sin, are exhibited in the wonderful sacrifice required for its expiation, and in the awful destiny of those who die impenitent.

The power of motive contained in the bible is evinced by the effect which its truths have on the heart and conscience. It is the means employed to awaken men to a sense of their guilt, and to excite them to seek deliverance from the dominion of sin. The power of the gospel is also proved by the fact, that where it is not known, there barrenness, and desolation, and death, universally prevail; and on the other hand, wherever a few spots of verdure appear in the wide moral waste extending over our globe, there this sacred stream flows. "Sanctify them," said our Lord, "through thy truth; thy word is truth." And ever since this prayer was uttered, a purifying influence has attended the reading and the hearing of the sacred scriptures.

Secondly, Jesus Christ gives freedom from the dominion of sin by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, which attend the exhibition of his truth. The word of God is called the sword of the Spirit; because it is the instrument employed in the conviction and conversion of sinners, and in the sanctification of believers. This blessed influence usually attends the truths of the gospel: and the proud and rebellious sinner is humbled and made "willing in a day of God's power:" willing to renounce his sins; willing to submit to the authority of God; willing to be saved by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

In subduing the rebellious to the obedience of the truth, no violence is offered to the free and regular operations of the soul. The regenerated man acts freely in the view of motives. Indeed he may now, with more propriety than ever, be called a free agent, because he acts under the guidance of reason and conscience—powers which ought to rule; and he keeps in subjection his appetites and passions, which were heretofore predominant.

Thus those whom the Son of God makes free, are free indeed: free from the curse of the divine law, free from the dominion of sin, restored to the liberty of the sons of God. This is a glorious freedom, of which all the powers of earth and hell cannot deprive the believer. Men may enslave the body, may load it with chains, confine it in prison, bind it to the stake; but the soul is still free. The curse of God does not rest upon it. Sin has no dominion over its renewed and disenthralled powers.

II. We said, also, *that the prevalence of the principles and spirit of the gospel, is the only certain means of securing and perpetuating NATIONAL FREEDOM.* Our remarks on this part of the subject, must necessarily be brief.

It is a truth, established by the experience of all nations, and of all ages, that an unenlightened and corrupt people cannot enjoy freedom; because they are destitute of the intelligence and virtue necessary to understand and maintain their rights. Igno-

rance and vice can be ruled only by the strong hand of despotism. When an uninstructed and vicious people attempt to exercise the high functions of self-government, anarchy and violence, the insecurity of property and life, are the inevitable consequences. Hence the unsuccessful attempts that have recently been made to establish free governments in the southern portions of our Continent, and in various parts of Europe. After a few mighty and successful efforts to throw off the yoke of their oppressors, they have turned their arms against each other, and oceans of human blood have flowed in the contest, who should rule and who should obey. It is honorable to the intelligence and virtue of the people of the United States, that they succeeded in establishing their independence; and that they have maintained free institutions more than half a century. But whether this shall be our condition for half a century to come, will depend, we venture to affirm, on the prevalence of the genuine principles of the gospel, more than on any other cause.

It may be doubted, whether the general diffusion of knowledge unconnected with moral and religious principle, would have any tendency to perpetuate the liberties of a nation. Were all educated, a greater number of aspirants to office would be created; and in the general contest for power, the public good would be sacrificed to local interests, and to the ambitious views of party leaders.

It is, then, in vain to depend on the general intelligence of the people alone, as an effectual barrier against the violence of anarchy and the encroachments of arbitrary power. Intelligence must be connected with moral principle to be of any avail. Pure morals, at least among the great body of the people, cannot exist without the sanctions of religion. We say, cannot exist because such has been the fact in the experience of all nations.

We need not attempt to prove, that Christianity has claims superior to every other religion; and that it exercises a more benign and beneficial influence than any other on the character and happiness of men in this life. We speak of the pure and unadulterated principles of the gospel, derived from the oracles of truth, and not handed out, by oral communication, in such portions and with such additions as may suit the avarice of priests and the ambition of tyrants. Experience justifies us in affirming, that wherever the sacred scriptures have been freely circulated and generally read, men have performed the various duties arising from their social relations, with more fidelity than in any other circumstances.

If the tendency of the gospel be, as we have shown in the preceding part of this discourse, to purify the heart, to restrain from vice, and to present the most powerful motives to virtuous

actions, it must, from the very nature of things, exert a salutary influence on the order of civil society. If parents and the heads of families be pious, they will endeavor to bring up their children and others under their care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And each individual, whatever be his station, will exert a salutary influence on those with whom he associates. In this silent and imperceptible manner, crimes will be prevented, and the charities of social life cherished much more effectually, than by the authority of the civil magistrate, or by the bayonets of hired soldiery.

It is freely admitted, that men must be intelligent in order to appreciate and preserve the blessings of freedom. And what more efficacious means than the bible can be devised to promote general education, and to diffuse intelligence among all classes of the community? The weekly addresses from the pulpit, and the catechetical instructions given to the young, are calculated to awaken the attention, and to create a desire of knowledge on subjects not immediately connected with religion. The oldest and most efficient colleges and universities in Europe, and in the United States, had their origin in a desire to prepare young men to preach the gospel. What would have been the condition of our country, if our pious forefathers had waited until statesmen, from mere secular motives, had founded and endowed institutions of learning? What has been and what is the prevailing inducement, in our country, to establish and maintain common schools? The farmer can plough his grounds and feed his cattle without consulting his almanac, and the mechanic can handle his tools and acquire wealth without a knowledge of arithmetic; but the Christian cannot consent that his children should grow up without being able to read the bible. What prompted the benevolent and noble effort to establish and maintain Sunday schools in every part of our country? Would the desire to make the rising generation more competent to manage their secular concerns, induce so many thousands of both sexes to devote one day in seven to the instruction of the ignorant? In these self-denying and gratuitous labors, the enlightened statesman will see the brightest presage of the perfection and permanence of our free institutions; yet it is certain, that, in these benevolent labors, the love of country is not the primary and chief motive.

It is true, there are men, loud in their professions of patriotism, who imagine they see, in these efforts to instruct the rising generation, a scheme to subvert the liberties of their country. Wonderful discovery! To see that to teach a child to read and to know that he is an accountable agent, is the way to make him a slave! To teach him to learn his duty immediately from

the bible, is the way to make him the dupe of crafty and avaricious priests! The withholding of the sacred scriptures from the hands of the people, was the cause of that dark and dismal night which enveloped Europe during the period appropriately styled *the dark ages*. As soon as the bible was brought out of the cloisters, where it had been locked up in an unknown language, like the sun rising in his glory, it dispelled the darkness which enveloped the nations. They saw the chains with which they were bound, and they resolved to be free. I could as easily believe that the rising of the sun will enshroud the world in darkness, as that a knowledge of the truths of the bible can prepare men to be slaves. Despots may dread to see this heavenly light breaking in on their dark dominions. Demagogues, who hope to rise to power on the ignorance of the people, may raise the cry of priestcraft, when they see the bible every where circulated, and all classes of the community taught to read it. But the enlightened and honest statesman, who studies no concealment of his actions, will rejoice in every judicious and well directed effort to send gospel truth to every part of our extended territory; and he will hail the efforts of Bible Societies and Sunday Schools as the brightest hope of his country's freedom.

The republics that were before us, have fallen: and what is there in our condition to lead us to hope that our existence as a free people will be of longer duration? The representative principle which we have introduced, and in which we differ from the ancient republics, will not justify our hopes. All the advantage which we derive from this principle, is, that it enables us to extend a popular government over a larger territory.

On looking around for some ground on which to found the delightful hope, that our free institutions shall exist ages and ages to come, I candidly confess that I see none except this: we have a purer and more benign religion; and we have the means of instructing the people both by the pulpit and by the press. By these means, that instruction which is more important than any other, may be given—instruction which purifies the heart, as well as enlightens the understanding—which creates and cherishes moral principle—and which nerves the soul to resist the seductions of vice. “Happy is that people, that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.”

We close with two inferences: 1. If the gospel has a salutary effect on civil society, then it is the duty and interest of all who love their country, to use their influence in maintaining and extending the principles and spirit of the gospel. At this time, we do not urge the most powerful motive that can be offered; a regard to the eternal well-being of our fellow men. We present

only a subordinate consideration,—the welfare of our country—the preservation of our free institutions. We call on all who feel an interest in the future destiny of their country, to maintain and extend the purifying spirit of the gospel—a means more efficacious than any other to check the corruption of morals, which always precedes the departure of national freedom.

And here we solemnly disclaim any intention of recommending an alliance between church and state. From the light of history, from the testimony of experience, we verily believe, that were such a union to take place, it would be the greatest curse that could fall on our country and on the church of God. We do not ask our legislators to enact laws in favor of any one christian sect; we do not even ask that they should maintain, by legislative enactments, Christianity itself without distinction of parties: all we ask of our rulers, as such, is that they preserve to us the rights of conscience—that they do not disfranchise us, because we are Christians—that they do not compel us to renounce our privileges as citizens or to violate the most positive and sacred precepts of our religion.

But in his unofficial capacity, we ask every citizen to use his influence in favor of the religion of the bible, as the only efficacious means of instructing the people, of purifying the public morals, and of perpetuating the blessings of a free government.

We want the example of all classes of the community, and we would that this example should proceed not merely from motives of worldly policy, but from the feelings of genuine piety. And believe me, there is a spirit and energy in an example which proceeds from the heart, tenfold greater than in the cold exterior of a life regulated by considerations of worldly policy. And in this case why should you act hypocritically? If religion be good for others, it will not injure you. Do not, we beseech you, poison the minds and corrupt the morals of others, by profane conversation and licentious example. The mischief resulting from such an influence frequently far overbalances distinguished public services.

For the reasons which we have stated, we recommend to all, especially to the young, to take an active and efficient part in every judicious plan to promote useful knowledge, and to improve private and public morals. The man who shall cause good and efficient schools to be established in his neighborhood, or who shall arrest the progress of a single vice, such, for example, as intemperance, will, we firmly believe, confer a greater benefit on his country than if he had repelled the invasion of a foreign foe. For, why may we not as well be conquered and subjugated by a foreign enemy, as corrupted and prostrated and ruined by one within our own bosom? For be assured, that the freedom and

well-being of a country cannot long survive the prostration of private and public morals. Let every individual think himself at liberty to do whatever the laws of the land permit him to do with impunity, or whatever he thinks he can do without detection, and there will be an end to the security of property, and reputation, and life.

To diffuse useful knowledge among the great body of the people, and to invigorate the tone of public morals, no means more effectual can be devised, than the prevalence of the principles and spirit of the gospel. Make a man a good Christian, and you make him a good citizen.

We do not undervalue the wisdom of statesmen in providing fortifications and an efficient navy, as means of defense against external enemies—in opening channels of easy communication, so as to connect distant parts of the country together by bonds of common interest. But these and similar measures do not guard against internal foes. They leave uncontrolled an enemy from which we have reason to apprehend the greatest danger. We want something which shall operate on man's moral constitution; which shall appeal to his sense of duty, as well as to his temporal interest; which shall point him to an invisible witness, and to an impartial Judge of his conduct. The bible is the only instrument which possesses this power.

Take a survey of our extensive territory, and behold the moral desolations, the ignorance and vice which prevail, especially in places destitute of the regular ministrations of the gospel,—and you will see much to alarm the fears of the patriot, who knows that the permanence of our free government ultimately rests on the intelligence and virtue of the people. You will see thousands of families without schools, destitute of moral and religious instruction, and incapable of reading the bible recently offered to them. And are these the freemen who are to elect our legislators and virtually enact our laws? And how are the calamities, which must follow the prevalence of ignorance and sin, to be averted? We answer, by diffusing useful knowledge; by patronizing Sunday schools; by distributing the bible and religious tracts; by sending the gospel to every part of our extensive territory.

2. But the most important duty inculcated by our subject, and designedly mentioned last on account of its importance, is the attainment of that personal freedom, which the Lord Jesus Christ only can give.

We have shown, that man, from the constitution of his nature as a rational and accountable agent, cannot be free from an obligation to obey a law. He must have some rule by which

to govern his actions, or he must renounce his rational character, and, like an idiot or a madman, act without reason and without motive.

The will of God, manifested in his works, and more clearly and fully expressed in the holy scriptures, is the only infallible rule of duty. Every individual, whose moral powers are not so perverted that he confounds all distinctions of right and wrong, must be convinced that he has transgressed this law. And without supposing the reader worse than others, such, we say, is your condition. You are a sinner: and unless you have availed yourself of the gracious provision which God has made for the forgiveness of sin, you are under sentence of condemnation, by a power from which you cannot escape. With the claims of a holy and just God resting upon you unanswered, you cannot, in the full import of the expression, be said to be a freeman. The most pure and innocent among men has contracted a moral debt, which a life of spotless innocence and active usefulness cannot cancel. If at any time your conscience be awakened to feel the weight of your guilt, you will be able to appreciate the preciousness of a truth which you have often heard, and of which, perhaps, you have never felt the value, viz. that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;"—that by his obedience and death he made so complete a satisfaction for sin, that there is now no condemnation to them who believe in his name and obey his commands. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ gives deliverance from the curse of the divine law, and restores those who are penitent to the immunities and privileges of the sons of God. "You shall be free indeed." Free in the highest and noblest sense of the term: citizens not merely of a free and powerful state, enjoying its protection, and having a right to participate in its honors; but citizens of heaven, destined to possess all its joys and all its glories.

But let it be remembered, that according to the wise constitution which God has established, no one is free from the guilt, who is not also free from the dominion, of sin; or, in other words, no one is justified in the sight of God, who is not also sanctified. For "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." The Son of God did not come into the world to proclaim an universal amnesty to rebels remaining opposed to the divine government: He came to "save his people from their sins."

An opinion unhappily prevails with too many, that religion is an irksome drudgery; that it will deprive them of their liberty, and confine them within a space so contracted that their elastic powers can have no room to expand. Banish from your mind this erroneous opinion. Be assured it is false. The words of our Lord and Master are true—"My yoke is easy and my

burden is light." Every individual emancipated from the bondage of sin, has found this declaration to be strictly true. And if this deliverance from sin were perfect, Christians might enjoy on earth the blessedness of heaven. That moral renovation, which Jesus Christ effects by his word and spirit, is the restoration of the soul, so far as it is accomplished, to perfect freedom in volition and action. If a man invariably acted wisely; if he never suffered his appetites and passions to lead him astray; if he always followed the dictates of reason and conscience,—would you call it bondage? Or, rather, is not this the only real freedom? Now this is the precise state to which the religion of Jesus Christ aims to bring us. Listen not, then, to the suggestions of those, who promise you freedom in casting off the yoke of Jesus Christ. Their freedom is the perversion of reason; the suppression of conscience; the elevation of the sensual and malignant passions, and consequently, the degradation of the whole moral man. Be assured, that real moral freedom consists in obeying the dictates of reason and conscience, enlightened and guided by the word of God. Beware of permitting any of your appetites and passions to obtain the mastery over you. They will bind you with cords not easily broken, and they will scourge you with a lash as pungent and as fatal as the sting of the scorpion.

If you would escape the most degrading bondage, and aspire to the citizenship of heaven, make the sacred scriptures the rule of your conduct; read them attentively, imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit, through whose agency only you can be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."